

Polit. Pamphlet vol 144

L E T T E R S

TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE
COUNT DE WELDEREN,

ON THE PRESENT SITUATION OF AFFAIRS

BETWEEN

G R E A T B R I T A I N

A N D T H E

U N I T E D P R O V I N C E S.

By JOHN ANDREWS, LL.D. *K*

Nulla venenato Litera mixta Joco.

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TO THE READER.

THE following Letters, in a manuscript, subscribed **ANGLO-BATAVUS**, were delivered into the hands of the **COUNT DE WELDEREN**, the late highly-respected **MINISTER**, from the **STATES GENERAL**, at our court, some days before his departure from this country. The Author was induced to take this liberty, in consequence of the favourable reception his **REVIEW OF THE CHARACTERS OF THE PRINCIPAL NATIONS IN EUROPE** met with in **HOLLAND**, where, as it contained a copious description of the inhabitants of the **UNITED PROVINCES**, it was translated into the Dutch language.

He

He meant to have submitted these Letters to the Public under the same subscription: but his friends being pleased to think, that what he has offered upon the present occasion, would be less attended to under an assumed signature, he has, in deference to their opinion, published them with his real name.

LETTER

LETTER I.

SIR,

I Presume your Excellency is of opinion, we live at a period not inferior, in point of celebrity and of importance, to the most famous that memory can recall, either in ancient or in modern ages; and hardly paralleled by that which gave birth to the state, of which your Excellency is so illustrious a member and representative.

Two centuries ago, a scene was exhibited to the eyes of the world, which struck with astonishment all the politicians and reflecting people at that age. They saw, like a world rising out of chaos, a commonwealth formed of the shattered remains of the inheritance of the once puissant house of Burgundy, which, in the course of less than half a century after its first establishment, was able to maintain a figure and a dignity, equal to that of monarchies whose power was founded on the duration of ages.

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It is not necessary to inform your Excellency, the commonwealth alluded to, was that of the United Provinces. No state we read of in history, owed its origin to men of greater virtues and abilities. It is with the pleasure which accompanies a disposition abhorrent of partiality, I will venture to assert, that in the course of a political existence amounting at present to the term of two hundred years, it has seldom derogated from that character of wisdom in its government at home, and in the management of its concerns abroad, which has so often and so deservedly excited the admiration and the applause of Europe.

The maxims and principles on which the founders of your celebrated republic erected the prosperity that has so long attended it, were the clear and perspicuous rules of public equity. They courted the good-will of princes and of states by the strictest observance of laws and treaties: they were assiduous in the discharge of every duty incumbent on them, through the faith which ought to subsist between different powers: they knew it was the only tie able to bind together, in peace and amity, nations independent of each other: they knew that without it suspicion arises at first and enmity at last.

They had learned, by their inspection into the
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annals of former times, that a strict adherence to probity is the surest basis of a country's prosperity, as much as it is the only secure method of obtaining and preserving private felicity: they saw with what indignation the world had ever treated public violators of national integrity: they found, that whatever emolument might arise from such infractions, it was momentary and deceitful; the shoots issuing from so poisonous a plant were always quickly blasted, while the infamy necessarily concomitant on such practices was durable and never forgotten.

They were sensible, that when a state habituates itself to deviate from those solemn contracts which constitute the reciprocal means of intercourse, it becomes guilty of the most enormous of all crimes; that of destroying the foundations of confidence and security throughout mankind, and of throwing society into a state of confusion, unavoidably resulting from mutual dread and mistrust.

They were convinced, that notwithstanding the declamations of affected shrewdness, there exists a political morality; from which whoever presumes to swerve, bewilders himself in numberless errors; and that nations thus transgressing, have invariably laid themselves open to the

most grievous calamities, and never failed to incur, soon or late, an ample and adequate punishment.

Such were the maxims which regulated the conduct of the many illustrious statesmen, who presided with so much splendor and success over the public concerns of your commonwealth on its first formation. Impartiality obliges me to add, they have been worthily imitated by the generality of their successors.

After this respectful preamble, justly due to those patriots whose memory your country with so much reason venerates, it is with heartfelt pain an Englishman takes up his pen, in order to lay before your Excellency the complaint and sorrow of his countrymen, upon the surprising reverse of behaviour towards them, now taking place in the councils and conduct of the Dutch, with regard both to the justice and the policy of the above-mentioned principles.

This unhappy reverse is demonstrably founded on the most fatal imprudence and temerity ; and, if not immediately opposed by the judicious and the dispassionate, with unremitting vigour and unquestionable sincerity, to unbiaſſed individuals of middling discernment must appear pregnant with all possible mischief ; as it evidently threatens with the horrors of the most
vengeful

vengeful and bloody hostilities, the inhabitants of Great Britain and Holland, should these latter persist in that insidious plan, into which they have been seduced by the enemies of both countries; who have too well succeeded in impressing your Excellency's countrymen with wrong notions of their interests.

I am not to inform your Excellency, that nothing is more easy than for bodies of men to mistake their real interest, as well as individuals: all history proves it, and none more than that of Holland. When in the middle of the last century, William, the second Stadtholder of that name, father of our great William, had miscarried in his attempt on the liberties of your country, the resentment of the ruling men at that time hurried them so far beyond the bounds of policy, as to revenge the crime of the Stadtholder upon the office itself: it became so odious, that it was instantly abolished, notwithstanding a fourscore years probation of its utility, of its necessity; notwithstanding the continual unvaried lustre which had attended the councils and the arms of the republic by land and sea, under the direction and the auspices of the three first Stadtholders, William, Mauritius, and Henry, the founders and supporters of the glory of your country. But the bad consequences of its abolition were soon apparent.

Deprived of that necessary poise, the system of internal government was soon unhinged; the rage of party entered into all public measures; they were no longer the result of cool and regular deliberations, but arose from the factious enthusiasm of the day: even the great De Wit became unequal to the task of stemming the torrent of such confusion, and fell at last a victim to those erroneous measures, which his abilities had so long contributed to support. It was, in short, found absolutely necessary to restore the house of Orange to its former authority. Had not this measure been adopted, the total destruction of the United Provinces must have ensued. But this re-union of the head to its members, operated like the election of a dictator among the Romans; it silenced and united all parties: the enemy, who like a sudden inundation had overflowed almost the whole country, was immediately repelled: fresh confidence and vigour inspired every one; and in a short time the state recovered its losses, and resumed its former splendor. I need not add, that Holland owed its salvation to the same expedient, little more than thirty years ago.

This instance, and others that might be adduced, shew there is a false and an apparent interest, as well as a sound and a real one.

one. The duty of a statesman consists in a clear discrimination of both: unless they are closely attended to, they will often be confounded, and the one mistaken for the other; in which case a people, as it has frequently happened, shall labour with all diligence and earnestness to effect their own infallible ruin.

As duration and independence form the basis of the prosperity of a state, they are therefore the chief objects its governors should keep in view: whatever favours these they are to cherish; whatever opposes them it is their business to avoid beyond all other temporary considerations.

While a people adhere to those maxims that rendered their ancestors great and happy, they cannot fail to remain in the same situation—a very plain and simple truth: yet we frequently see persons reputed wise, departing from it with as much presumption as if they had discovered it to be a falshood.

The means by which the Dutch commonwealth arrived to the degree of happiness it so long enjoyed, and may undoubtedly continue to possess, without any dread of deprivation, have already been mentioned. It is with equal astonishment and regret, those politicians, who look into futurity, perceive a total inattention to those salutary maxims, in that conduct, which

unhappily for the certain, if not immediate detriment of Holland, appears, at present, the most eligible in the opinion of numbers of its deluded inhabitants; whose intemperate zeal for what seems the public interest, makes them forget, that nothing can be prosperous which is not permanently beneficial, and free from pernicious consequences.

The love of our country is, doubtless, a noble impulse in the human mind; and, while under due restriction, is the fruitful parent of numberless benefits. But as it is the greatest and most useful quality in a good citizen, considered in his civil capacity, it may also degenerate into the most dangerous evil, when it excludes from the sphere of grandeur and happiness all those who are not comprized in the political society to which he belongs.

Hence a prince, or a nation, pursuing methods of aggrandisement evidently repugnant to the welfare and the safety of other states, is justly considered as an object of their detestation, and it becomes their joint interest to treat them as incendiaries, and enemies to society.

For this reason we have a right to execrate the memory of the Romans and Carthaginians, in whom the lust of power extinguished all considerations of natural equity; and who
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aimed at a total subjugation of all other people, in order to gratify their covetousness and their pride.

When a plan is proposed to the conductors of a state, obviously calculated to enrich or to aggrandise it at the expence of others, their first consideration should be, whether it may not prove in the issue, quite contrary to the end intended; either by uniting other states against them, in order to oppose the progress of their ambition, or by putting too much power into the hands of crafty neighbours, who may be willing to admit them for a time to share in the spoils of those, whom they are about to sacrifice to their own ambitious designs.

They who pay so much admiration to the conduct of the Romans, would do well to reflect, it was the disunion and want of forecast in the numerous enemies they were continually creating, that occasioned them to escape destruction. Their own historians are well aware of this truth; and seem amazed at the indolence and supineness with which the world beheld their progress to universal empire. Had the surrounding nations acted with any degree of sagacity, Rome could not, according to the clearest calculations of policy, have attained to any degree of power beyond mediocrity.

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Its general system was therefore erroneous, as it tended to embroil it in perpetual quarrels with its neighbours, and to league them together for its destruction.

Neither is it safer to assist in the plunder and oppression of another nation ; chiefly when that power which invites and urges forward, is more formidable than ourselves. This is a rule, the observance of which appeared highly indispensable to the Dutch politicians, who figured in Holland while Cardinal Richelieu governed in France. This celebrated minister, whose aims were at all events to crush the House of Austria, and to raise that of Bourbon upon its ruins, had determined to leave no method untried to effect his purpose. To this intent, your Excellency well knows, he held out to your countrymen the splendid offer of partitioning the Spanish Low Countries between France and Holland : but whatever engagements were formed at the Hague with D'Estade, that dextrous negociator was not able to compass the plan projected. The Dutch knew too well the danger of such a neighbourhood as that of France ; and have preserved the same knowledge to this day. It is hoped, for our mutual interests, they will continue to keep at a proper distance from all such offers as may approximate them to the views of those,

those, who are long since become their natural enemies as well as our own.

I write to your Excellency with the confidence and earnestness of a true Englishman. No one deserves that name, who does not feel for the preservation and prosperity of your country almost as much as for his own. A famous patriot and philosopher of this nation in the last century, one who was highly and deservedly respected by your countrymen, used to glory in being the happy instrument of reconciling the jarring interests of Great Britain and Holland, and was ever asserting, that Englishmen and Dutchmen should consider themselves as brethren, and that none but those who were enemies to both, would insinuate ideas of a contrary tendency.

I need not inform your Excellency, the assertor and promulgator of this truth was the great Sir William Temple, the favourite of that preserver of Great Britain and Holland, William the Third, the intimate of De Wit, and the friend and companion of the many conspicuous characters which graced your country at that illustrious æra.

I do not think it presumption for Englishmen to flatter themselves, that what Sir William Temple was in Holland, during the last century, at a very interesting period to your

country,

country, your Excellency may prove at a still more interesting period for both countries.

Relying, therefore, on that warmth and zeal in the public cause, which you have inherited from your noble ancestors, it were an insult to your Excellency's rank and understanding, to doubt your readiness to listen to the voice of truth, when it approaches you with that respect which is due to your character.

Encouraged by these motives, I will use no further apology for the freedom I have taken, and shall proceed to take, in treating of the subject I have presumed to lay before your Excellency, with that latitude of disquisition which it merits, and that liberty of speech, without which it were vain to attempt to do it justice.

It is a subject well deserving the attention of all honest men in Great Britain, and in Holland; it is, indeed, *plenum opus aleæ*, a business replete with importance; and teeming with danger, if unskilfully managed by those whose duty it is to consult the right interest of both countries.

In a business of this nature, it behoves every public man to throw aside all petty partialities and prejudices, and to cast a severe eye on those who would wantonly and unnecessarily

rily revive the remembrance of past animosities, whether well or ill founded. None but the ignorant, or the designing, will take any pleasure in dwelling upon them; and they are both equally unworthy of notice; the only difference between them is, that the first are objects of contempt, and the second of execration.

Let us, at the same time, reflect, that however exasperating the recollection of some past transactions may be, they prove no more than that our ancestors have been guilty of errors and misdeeds: but let us also recall to our minds, how many reciprocal proofs of friendship and benevolence have taken place between both people; so many, that it is not easy to settle on which side the scale of good offices preponderates. Suffice it, that we have been mutually benefited to a degree which ought to erase the memory of all unhappy altercations, and to make us unite in a firm resolution to live together in the same friendly intercourse, proved by experience so advantageous to both; notwithstanding the secret endeavours that are, at this hour, so assiduously and so vigorously exerted to disunite us.

A disunion between Great Britain and Holland, on the one hand, and a family compact between the branches of the House of Bourbon,

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on the other, is a phenomenon which must strike politicians with amazement, and confound all the speculations and conjectures with which men of ingenuity and reasoning have been exercising their judgment and imagination for more than a century past. Such an event would at once defeat the whole array of modern politics, and render men averse to all kind of ratiocination in such matters. It would, in Milton's language, be confusion worse confounded; and must, at one blow, crush the entire fabric of that system which the wisdom of our, and of your forefathers, has been so long and so anxiously forming for the balance of power; which the treasures of both countries have been lavished to maintain; and which has been cemented by the effusion of half the blood that has been shed throughout Europe, during the last century.

Let us pause on this idea, which is neither false nor exaggerated: let us ask ourselves a question, arising naturally from the subject: Did our ancestors, in framing this project of a balance of power, in supporting it with so much solicitude, in laying down their lives for it with so much courage and heroism; did they act the part of brave and wise men, or did they bewilder themselves in ridiculous schemes, unfit for the consideration of thinking men, and impracticable in their nature?

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This is a question which demands a very serious answer; an answer which will fully decide, not only of the rectitude or the impropriety of past transactions, but will as fully teach us what measures are best adapted to the present crisis.

Well am I aware, that in France, in Holland, and in other countries, there are many individuals ready to affirm, that the notion of a necessity of preserving a due equipoise among the European powers is a mere chimera, which has kept the world in perpetual alarm, since its first introduction into the public councils of the various states; that it has produced nothing but jealousies without foundation, and broils without end, wherever it has prevailed.

This is the language of Frenchmen, in general, and of all those who abet French politics; a very numerous and busy tribe in too many parts of Europe.

But is this the language of reason and experience? is it the language of those men who have held the reins of government, with honour to themselves, and benefit to the countries they governed? is it even the language of such Frenchmen as have rendered themselves famous and respectable for their wisdom and political endowments?

These all concur in asserting the necessity
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of watching over the increase and decrease of strength in the several kingdoms and states with which a people is connected; and that to shut our eyes on their transactions, argues the grossest ignorance of our interest; since it is impossible, in the very nature of things, to escape the influence of power, over all that is within its reach; an inferior degree being quickly absorbed in a superior, unless this latter is counteracted by a combination of powers, the united weight of which becomes thereby an equipoise to its own.

One would think an idea so simple, so clear as this, should not meet with a dissent. It is by no means of so late a fabrication, as its opposers have thought fit to represent it. We may date its origin from the remotest ages of civilized antiquity. The Greeks were well acquainted with it, as appears from their orators and their historians: the many republics which formerly filled that once-flourishing country, well understood its use and value: it was not until corruption had ruined the morals of their leading men, that by neglecting it, they became the prey of ambitious princes; to whom this doctrine of the balance of power can never be acceptable.

In the following ages the same ideas were equally prevalent. Ancient writers are full of them:

them. We find them in Livy: Polybius abounds with them. There is a remarkable passage in Justin, tending to inculcate the necessity of preventing the preponderance of power in any country. This passage consists of a speech put into the mouth of Hannibal, wherein that great politician, as well as great general, enlarges on the expediency of uniting, from all quarters, in a speedy and vigorous opposition to the tyrannical incroachments of the Romans.

In later times we see a renewal of the same spirit. When Charles the fifth, by the acquisition of the Imperial crown, had united in his person the sovereignty of the Low Countries, of Germany, and of Spain, the states and potentates of Europe became immediately interested in all his motions; and France, the next in power to him, met with the support and good wishes of all its neighbours, England occasionally not excepted, in opposing his manifold schemes of ambition.

Anterior to this period, which was not long after the commencement of the sixteenth century, we find the notion of a balance of power established, and operating throughout the empire, even before the exaltation of the House of Hapsburgh, now the House of Austria, to the Imperial throne, in the person of

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Rodolphus,

Rodolphus, the first of that name : an event which took place in the seventy-second year of the thirteenth century.

Neither should we forget, that in the many bloody contentions between England and France, during the reigns of the Plantagenets on the one side, and the Valois on the other, these, when hard pressed, which was often the case, did not fail to set forth very pathetically in their public documents, and by the mouth of the many negociators and emissaries they employed at the courts of other princes, how dangerous to the rest of Europe, and therefore how impolitic and unjust it would be, to suffer the kings of England to become masters of France.

After the death of Charles the fifth, the ambition and inhumanity of his son and successor, Philip the second of Spain, roused the whole world against him. The system of a regular opposition to any power of an alarming magnitude, became the reigning topic of politics. The consequence was, that at the demise of Philip, the strength of Spain was diminished to a degree of which that haughty court was not sufficiently aware, as it continued to act on the same ambitious plan, during the reign of the two last Philips of
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the Austrian family, to the total ruin of the Spanish monarchy.

Queen Elizabeth, the glory of her sex, and of this nation, was so truly sensible of the justness of preserving this equiponderance of power, that her whole life was dedicated to the establishment and support of it. In this view she upheld and fixed the crown of France on the head of the great Henry the fourth: in this view she afforded that countenance and protection to the malcontents of the Low Countries, which enabled them to shake off the yoke of their tyrant Philip: in this view she would, had she been properly served and seconded, have wrested from him the kingdom of Portugal; his usurpation of which she well foresaw the consequences of: in this view, finally, she had the discernment clearly to discover, that all risks, all dangers were to be encountered: she met them, accordingly, with the magnanimity of a heroine: she ventured her crown, her person, and her people, in this just and necessary cause, with a courage and a conduct that endeared her not only to her own subjects, but to the many others, among the European nations, who were embarked on the same bottom; and who were equally convinced, with her own people, of the soundness of the principles she had adopt-

ed, and of the wisdom of her conduct in their prosecution.

In France itself, before the spirit of conquest and oppression had possessed the councils of that monarchy, we see their ministries invariably pursuing this very track, which they now affect to deride. We see the greatest of their statesmen, Richelieu, employing the whole of his abilities in subverting the Austrian greatness in Germany, in Italy, in the Low Countries, in every quarter of the globe, where the arms or the influence of France could extend. Animated by this just motive, we view him raising up associates and allies in the farthest regions of Europe : we behold the kings of Denmark and of Sweden successively fighting under his banners ; and weakening y their victories, or exhausting by their defeats, the strength of that enemy, whom he proposed that France should meet half conquered in the field.

With such authorities, such examples before us, is it possible to listen with patience to the suggestions of those heralds of ambition, who are every where proclaiming the difficulties and inconveniences attending that spirit of opposition, which tends to render men indefatigable in labouring to set bounds to the multifarious claims and enterprizes of princes,
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and in challenging and exercising a right of enquiry and controul in all that is doing and planning throughout the world?

But to persons of your Excellency's distinguished knowledge and penetration, such absurdities cannot certainly be welcome. Your countrymen are peculiarly remarkable for a coolness of perception that is not easily imposed upon: it is not therefore to be apprehended the sensible and judicious among them, who are many, will now become the dupes of those numerous emissaries, who, in order to destroy the balance of power, are striving to sow the seeds of dissension between the United Provinces and this island.

Great Britain has been long and justly considered as the bulwark of that system which admits the balance of power as a necessary basis. No realm in Europe has done more for the common cause. Our abilities, our treasures, our blood, have been profused in the numberless contentions wherein we have been engaged on that account.

Let me add, it is a cause wherein your Excellency's countrymen have also acted, at times, by no means an inferior part. England and Holland, I say it with exultation, have fought, have bled, have conquered side by side, in this noble cause. It is peculiarly

their own: while it prospers, their honour and liberty are safe; but if, through infatuation, through despicable wranglings, through the secret machinations of our enemies, it should be abandoned, we shall both have reason to rue that evil hour. We may then bid adieu to the figure and consequence we have both so long and so gloriously maintained; but which, at the same time, we should constantly remember, we have maintained through our friendship and union, and cannot fail to lose if we should separate.

This separation is the grand object which the House of Bourbon is now labouring to effect; and which, dreadful to think, it has partly effected. The time is come when the cool, the wary, the circumspectful inhabitants of the United Provinces have suffered themselves to be worked into a spirit of fury and resentment against their ancient and best friends; who, driven to the extremest difficulties by the iniquitous confederacy of their natural and inveterate foes, with a large portion of their own people, have thought themselves authorized by the great law of self-preservation, to cut off those succours and supplies from the enemy, which could not fail to operate to their own destruction.

An impartial spectator of such proceedings
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on the one side, and such indignation at them on the other, would necessarily, if ignorant of the real situation of affairs, and unacquainted with the politics of the times, imagine the Dutch were deeply interested in furthering the ruin of the English; and that nothing could more effectually benefit Holland, than to co-operate with France in destroying the power of England.

The case between Great Britain and the United Provinces cannot be stated with greater truth; no man, who values his title to candour and impartiality, will venture to state it otherwise; and I therefore presume, that your Excellency will view it in the light in which it is here represented.

It cannot be a matter of indifference to a nobleman of your exalted rank, who feels the necessity of the connection subsisting between Holland and Great Britain, and who, as an individual of the first consequence, in the first of these countries, is so materially interested in its welfare; it cannot, I say, possibly be a matter of indifference to such a person, to see the wrath and rancour unhappily propagating among his countrymen, against the people of this realm, for their using the means which Providence has left in their power, to defend themselves against one of

the most formidable, as well as most unjustifiable conspiracies that ever was framed for the total extirpation of a state.

Can it be supposed, that your Excellency's countrymen are impressed with a conviction, that they have hitherto trodden in the path of error; that their antipathy to France was unjustly founded; that the French were their real friends, and the English their real enemies; that to depress these, and to exalt the former, is, therefore, their speediest road to prosperity?

Aburd as this reasoning must appear, it is the only way of justifying the present behaviour of the Dutch: it is the only one that can confer any sanction on the measures they seem so eager to adopt, in order to reduce us to the utmost distress, by depriving us of the most effectual means of self-defence, and by enabling our enemy to wound us in our most assailable part.

And yet there exists not a Dutchman, in his right senses, who would not revolt at such a description of his countrymen's designs: who would not condemn any of them who should endeavour to disprove that an amity of the strongest nature, between Great Britain and the United Provinces, is an object which both countries should have perpetually in
view;

view; and, that no man could merit the appellation of patriot, in either country, who did not unfeignedly believe this to be a maxim essentially necessary in the government of both, and from which to depart would be little less than treason to either.

Whence therefore this anger, this rage at our assertion of the commonest right of mankind, the right of self-defence?

The answer to this question must give pain to all dispassionate men: it can be no other, than that a people, once eminently quick-sighted in whatever related to their well-being, and long reputed the keenest politicians in Europe, have so far degenerated, as to run counter to their dearest interests, to throw aside all reflection on the perilousness of their conduct, and for the sake of a paltry emolument, the existence of which must, in the nature of things, be short-lived, to risk the very life and preservation of their state?

Such is the answer which impartiality must absolutely return to those who demand the reason, why the States of Holland espouse with so much heat the cause of those among their subjects, who have complained, that the English will not suffer their ships to carry naval stores and ammunition to the French.

That the very life and preservation of your
country

country is at stake, is not to be questioned, when we cast our eyes on the many remarkable circumstances attending the dispute arisen between Great Britain and her Colonies; when we view on one side the parent state straining every nerve to bring matters to their former condition; and consider, on the other side, the immense efforts used by the united strength of the House of Bourbon, to dismember the British empire.

Can your Excellency frame to your imagination a more dangerous crisis for the liberties of your country, than the present, when that state, which your knowledge tells you has hitherto proved their best and surest friend, is threatened with the most compleat destruction?

Well must your Excellency know, that in the fate of Great Britain is involved the fate of Holland. It is not only on the score of ambition and politics that our destruction is projected; there is also another motive, not less forcible, and, unhappily for mankind, too prevalent, even in this enlightened age. I need not tell your Excellency, that motive is religion. Great Britain and Holland are the two main pillars of Protestantism: bigotry will unite with political inveteracy; and whoever expects the House of Bourbon will
stop

stop short at the humiliation of Great Britain, sees things by halves, and is unworthy the name of a politician.

Where is that history which points out conquerors and destroyers resting in the midst of their career? Do the Dutch flatter themselves that England alone is aimed at in the present contest? Do they hope, that after the navies of England have been destroyed, her islands in the West Indies taken, her American provinces wrested from her; do they hope, that when her commerce is lost, her credit sunk at home, and her reputation abroad; when discontent, confusion, and rebellion, shall be raging in the bowels of the kingdom, do they hope that France will seize that opportunity to manifest a moderation and forbearance, of which no annals have yet made mention?

If your Excellency will recollect the instructions which you have often received from the perusal of history, I am convinced my opinion will be honoured with your concurrence, when I make bold to assert, that the House of Bourbon will rejoice at an opportunity to be revenged of the many disappointments it has met with, in the course of its ambitious projects, at our and your united hands; it will take a severe vengeance for its disappointment in the seventy-second year of the last century,

century, as well as for the disgraces heaped on the latter years of Lewis the fourteenth, during the war for the succession to the crown of Spain; and they who now possess it will not fail to wreak their resentment on those who acted so strenuously in opposing their accession to that throne.

Few, if any, of those who form political conjectures, will differ from me in this representation of the probable consequences of the downfall of Great Britain.

How far the vengeance of the House of Bourbon will extend, will depend entirely on the conduct of the European powers, in whom a sufficiency of strength will remain to check it: but that France will set no other bounds to it, than those of inability to carry it any further, all must allow who are acquainted with the temper of her politics, and who revolve her former conduct in the triumphant years, as the French stile them, of Lewis the fourteenth; when, trampling on treaties, laws, good faith, and common decency, he made no scruple to seize whatever he could literally come at; when, setting at defiance the stings of conscience, he depopulated and wasted countries, and set fire to towns and cities, merely because they belonged to those whom he had forced to become his enemies.

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Let no man say that the dispositions of the times are altered. Success alone shews the real disposition of mankind. The most vindictive can restrain their passion, when conscious of their inability to gratify it; and the most ambitious know how to affect moderation, when a display of their haughtiness would only tend to render them odious, without furthering their designs.

Shall it then be said, that the wisdom of the most celebrated Republic in Europe either did not, or affected not, to perceive its real situation before it was too late? Forbid it, good faith and national honour; forbid it, the good genius of both nations; forbid it, the common interest of Europe, and, let me add, of all mankind.

It cannot, in the mean time, be expected, that Great Britain shall relinquish the exercise of rights inherent in every human society: but surely Great Britain is entitled to an expectation, that Holland, on a due and serious consideration of the criticalness of the times, of the manifold enemies we have to encounter, of the difficulties surrounding this kingdom on every side, of the various dangers menacing our very political existence, and, above all, of the very near connection of our destiny with that of the United Provinces; on all these

these considerations, this nation may justly presume, the councils of the States General will not continue in that line of enmity we have experienced lately; and that the eyes of their ruling men will be open to discern their interest and ours to be but one.

I began this Letter by remarking, that the present age yields to none, in point of importance. But may we not go further, and assert, that, since the primitive æras of human civilisation, it is perhaps on the point of holding the first place in that respect, when we turn our attention to the mighty events which now seem struggling for birth in the womb of time, and to the prodigious changes that have happened in the political situation of states and kingdoms in the course of a few years?

What would make the present epocha remarkable indeed, and render the memory of it lamentable to all posterity, is the dreadful reverse which must infallibly take place throughout all Europe, should the designs of the House of Bourbon be ever effected, in that latitude we have ample reason to conjecture they meditate.

I am well founded in calling that reverse dreadful, which will put the reins of power into the hands of the greatest enemy that ever the public liberties of Europe experienced;

enced; which will take the dominion of the sea from the only two states that could, by their geographical position, exercise it to the benefit, but never to the detriment of Europe; and which will invest with the exclusive commerce of America, two monarchies already powerful enough to be dangerous to all other nations; but who then will become possessors of a degree of might, which, upon the soundest calculation of their probable increase of commerce, dominions, and riches, will bid fair to be styled almost, if not wholly, irresistible.

Such will be the issue of the present contest, should Great Britain be overpowered by her numerous enemies. Your Excellency's constituents will then have leisure to repent for having assisted in so deplorable a work; and your countrymen for having, by their clamours and obstinacy, compelled their rulers to adopt measures, the fatal tendency of which was obvious to every unbiassed perception.

How inconsiderable and poor are those benefits which avarice so greedily grasps at, when they must necessarily be purchased at so heavy a price as that of national honour and the safety of your state? neither of which, your Excellency must clearly perceive, are reconcileable with the claims of your countrymen

men to carry on such branches of commerce as effectually amount to an assistance of, and a co-operation with, our enemies.

Let us now consider on what ground these unhappy claims are founded, and whether it is possible that any foundation can be solid enough to support them.

Your Excellency will permit me to call them unhappy, because, if I should fail to prove their invalidity, it will yet remain a melancholy truth, beyond the necessity of any proof, that the exercising of them must infallibly give birth to every species of calamity.

These claims are founded, it is said, on the right of trading in naval stores, granted by treaty, and now enjoyed by the subjects of the United Provinces for the space of more than one hundred years.

Here then is a clear, positive, and unqualified assertion of rights challenged by the body of a nation, which, with the same breath, denounce enmity against all who shall attempt to oppose the enforcing them in the most ample and unrestrained latitude.

Before we enter into the merits of this case, will your Excellency permit me to ask a previous question, and to insist on a categorical answer, from those who build upon this assertion

tion with so much confidence, as to deem it an argument of itself? This question shall not be wrapped up in intricacies, nor liable to be misunderstood: it shall be plain, simple, and direct: the merchants and traders who walk the Change of Amsterdam, assisted by a common share of understanding and education, are as able to answer it as the shrewdest politician that shines in the assemblies at the Hague.

Do the States General, does the Dutch nation, consider the English in the light of foes, or in the light of friends?

A question of this sort, and an unequivocal answer, constitute a necessary preliminary to any discussion on the right claimed, as aforesaid, by your Excellency's countrymen.

It is impossible, in questions wherein nations are concerned, to disjoin legality from propriety. Many things may be lawful in themselves, when divested of the consideration of the circumstances attending them, which, your Excellency is deeply sensible, must appear quite otherwise, when weighed against the scale of concomitances.

I, therefore, again require an answer to that plain, that clear, that decisive question, Are we your friends, or are we your foes?

Lives there a Dutchman, conversant in the
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affairs of his country, who shall stand up and affirm the last? Or does your Excellency imagine, that the whole collective body of your sensible countrymen would not unanimously affirm the first?

If, then, we are your friends (which Heaven forbid we should not perpetually remain) if your Excellency, and your countrymen, would spurn at the idea which might insinuate the contrary, what is the rest of the world to think, when they see that interpretation put upon treaties, and that conduct assumed, in consequence of such interpretation, which transforms your countrymen into the worst of enemies: of enemies under the denomination of friends?

When two such illustrious states as Great Britain and Holland enter into leagues and treaties, can it be supposed, that, like lawyers cavilling at the bar, their aim is to catch at words, and entangle each other in the subtilties and intricacies of expression?

Treaties, entered into by free and independent nations, must always be supposed to have been framed, agreed upon, and ratified, by the wisest heads respectively. We cannot, therefore, entertain the most distant conception, that any articles, detrimental to the interest, much less to the very existence of
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either, could find their way into such treaties; whether by positive mention, or by tacit implication.

The intent of all treaties is, either to put an end to hostilities, or to strengthen the bonds of peace; but if we admit such meanings to be possibly deduced from them, as may prove of the utmost mischief to the one, or the other, of the contracting parties, they can no longer be considered as ties of friendship, but as snares to draw in the unwary.

Since, then, by the rules of plain sense: by the dictates of honour: by the consent of all nations: public contracts have ever been viewed in the light of mutual benefits to both parties, how comes it that a people highly conspicuous for the general wisdom of their conduct, should seem determined to bury in oblivion, or, what is worse, to treat with contempt, maxims received, without hesitation, throughout all states, and adopted, implicitly, by all wise men, whether ministers of those states, or authorized by their experience, their talents, and their knowledge, to employ their pens in lucubrations of this nature.

Those who preside over public affairs cannot too frequently advert to the propriety, the necessity of interpreting all regulations

relating to public matters, according to the spirit from whence they originated; that alone which gave them birth, will ever give them efficacy. But if, on the contrary, a pedantic adherence to words prevails, forms may undoubtedly remain, but the life and soul that should animate them, will quickly evaporate.

Need I tell your Excellency, that to the studied observance of words and forms many heavy calamities have owed their origin. The very first page of Tacitus informs us, it was due to the prevalence of words and forms, divested of their original sense and meaning, that the Roman republic, after falling from freedom into slavery, retained the exterior marks and verbal appendages of its former condition so compleatly, that no difference was discernible, to a vulgar, unpenetrating eye.

But what resulted from this preservation of the pomp and trappings of freedom? A surer method of tyranny and oppression; to which, probably, that people would not have submitted, could they have seen the reality of their situation, and had they not been imposed upon by the arts of deception.

Your Excellency must, in the course of your reading, have often been struck with
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the anxious solicitude shewn, on many occasions, by such as had a point to carry prejudicial to the other party, by insisting on a strict conformity to the letter of treaties.

The very people we have last mentioned, were notorious in this particular. They seldom missed an opportunity, as Montesquieu observes, when they could avail themselves of the equivocalness of their language, to interpret their agreements with other nations, in that sense which was most favourable to their views.

This leads one almost naturally to remark, how justly they were themselves rewarded for this infraction of the laws of good faith; and how amply they merited a retribution of the same kind, by seeing themselves insulted with the nominal possession of what they had so dearly prized; and of which none but the ignorant multitude could not feel the deprivation.

The Romans, however, were not the sole people who made use of this equally wicked and absurd adherence to mere words, in defiance of sense and honesty.

The middle ages, justly stiled the ages of ignorance and barbarity, are full of passages of this kind: quirks and quibbles were held in estimation, and he who knew best how to

cavil, was deemed the properest man to be employed in the transaction of public affairs.

But, without appealing to the testimonies of remoter times, we need only recollect what happened in France, during the reign of Lewis the Fourteenth, after the peace of Nimeguen. Your Excellency's indignation has, doubtless, been often moved at the recital of the arrogance and presumption with which that monarch had the effrontery to erect courts of judicature, under the name of Chambers of Re-union, before which foreign states and princes were cited, and questioned about their titles; his own subjects acting, in virtue of his own commission, as judges and juries over those who were too feeble to resist his oppressions. They were, accordingly, stripped of their inheritances by the arbitrary sentences and interpretations of these tyrannical commissioners, who employed all the arts of chicanery and prevarication to overcome right and equity, as often as they stood in the way of their master's pretensions; and who wrested, without scruple, words and expressions from the spirit of their primitive and obvious meaning.

Much more might be said on this subject. It is, in truth, too copious for the happiness
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of society. But what has been said will, it is hoped, make good the assertion, that the spirit of national compacts and treaties is the only foundation on which we are able to erect the superstructure of their real meaning and proper interpretation.

I shall here drop my pen for the present; and, entreating your Excellency to peruse with indulgence, what has been written with the purest intentions, I reserve the further discussion of this important matter to another time; and remain, with all that deference and respect which is due to your rank and character,

S I R,

Your Excellency's, &c.

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LETTER

LETTER II.

SIR,

YOUR Excellency will please to recollect, that I concluded my preceding letter, by enforcing the necessity of adhering to the spirit of treaties, in preference to the meer wording of them; and that I endeavoured to adduce, what I hope your Excellency will admit to be valid and sufficient arguments in proof of that position.

Having, therefore, established the indispensable obligation, of uniting into one indivisible idea, the propriety and legality of all transactions between separate and independent nations; and shewn the impropriety of Holland assisting France any wise in the present conjuncture of affairs: I might claim an exemption from entering into any further discussion of this subject, were it not adviseable to combat, one by one, the various minutiae with which the enemies of both countries have

have clouded and enveloped this matter, in order to conceal from them the reality of things, and with a view of leading them blindfold to the precipice from which they design to plunge them.

Of this precipice we stand on the brink. From the rage of parties and the violence of factions on your side of the water, a spirit of intoxication on this matter has got such fast hold of the minds of the many, that it will prove a difficult task to prevent them from throwing themselves into that gulph of perdition, which the deceitful, iniquitous arts of treacherous emissaries, and of false patriots, are, with such malicious industry and diligence, preparing for them.

For this reason, a circumstantial examination of the pretensions of your countrymen, shall now succeed the general view in which they have been stated in my former letter. I shall endeavour, by an impartial discussion of their legality, as well as of their propriety, to cast the fullest light on every part of this important subject.

In order to set this interesting case on such a footing of perspicuity, that no honest and sensible man shall mistake it, a retrospect into past times will be not only useful, but absolutely necessary. It will shew the connection
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between effects and causes; it will point out the reasons and motives that have influenced public transactions and treaties; and will, therefore, enable us to discover in what spirit, and to what purpose and intent, they were conducted and framed.

Your Excellency is thoroughly acquainted with that intimacy of attachment, that unity of interests, which connected England and Holland at the commencement of your state. The assistance given to its founders by our great Elizabeth: the zeal and courage exerted on land and sea, by the fleets and armies employed in its protection and establishment: are topics that need not be insisted on. The names of Sydney, of Vere, of Norris, are as familiar in Holland, to persons of reading, as those of Egmont, of Horn, and of those many other worthies, who either fell a sacrifice to despotic power, or died bravely in the field, fighting for the rights and the honour of their country.

Your Excellency remembers, this generous spirit of mutual union and support, lasted with unabated vigour to the demise of Elizabeth. Notwithstanding the pacific disposition of her successor, the friendship and warmest wishes of England for the prosperity of your country, continued still the same: our nobility, our gentry,

gentry, our commonalty, were unanimous in their warmth for your welfare and defence; and it became almost a disgrace, for an Englishman, not to have made at least one campaign in the service of the United States.

Hence your armies were filled with English officers and soldiers, who were inspired with as much animation in your cause, as if they had drawn their first breath in your country, and who well merited the elogiums, which the heroes of the house of Nassau had such frequent occasions to bestow on those prodigious instances of valour and intrepidity they were witnesses of in our people.

Your Excellency will allow me to dwell with pleasure, on the recollection of those happy, those glorious times, and to wish, with all the sincerity of a true Englishman, for their renovation.

The period which followed that of our James the First, was, during a long space, too tempestuous at home, to admit of much inspection abroad. It was not till the restoration of the son of Charles the First to the throne of his unfortunate father, this nation can truly be said to have resumed its preceding plan and system of acting, either in its domestic sphere, or with foreign nations.

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In the reign of Charles the Second, an unfortunate interruption took place, of the good intelligence that ought always to have subsisted between England and Holland.

But when we attentively examine the commencement and progress of those differences, we shall find the evil genius which would now rekindle the flames of dissension between the Dutch and English, to be precisely the very same which succeeded in effecting it at that time.

That this is not the meer language of declamation must be evident to your Excellency: who is not to learn, the intrigues of France were at the bottom of all those broils, in which the lives of so many brave men in England and Holland were sacrificed.

There was, however, too large a fund of good sense and patriotism in both countries, to suffer such absurd quarrels to remain long unended. The designs of France were too clear to escape the most undiscerning. The letters and memoirs of those times, take peculiar notice of the secret pleasure, with which the court of Lewis the Fourteenth saw two formidable nations, that should have united to frustrate his ambition, becoming rivals on an element, which, in good policy, they ought to share

share in common; and covering the ocean with the most immense navies, in order to effect their reciprocal destruction.

Your Excellency cannot fail to recollect, with how much cunning and artifice the French ministry laid the plan, for our and your ruin; nor with what a notorious strain of dissimulation, its behaviour to both parties was accompanied.

Your Excellency well knows with what an affectation of warmth for the interests of Holland, France engaged in the first of these quarrels against England; nor with what an assumed spirit of pride, and vindictiveness for the injuries done to the honour of our Charles, she joined England in the second, against Holland.

Thus it became evident to the politicians of that æra, the intentions of the French were no other than to make use of the impolitic animosities arisen between the English and Dutch, for their successive destruction; well knowing, that while they continued to act on the sound principles of reciprocal amity, the pernicious schemes of France must prove abortive.

In consequence of this conviction in the minds of all the dispassionate, both in England and Holland, they quickly came to the determination

mination of putting an end to all contentions between them, and of uniting in the firmest bonds of friendship, against Lewis the Fourteenth, for their respective security against the designs of that restless monarch.

Actuated by these just and laudable views, they not only terminated the differences that had given rise to enmity between them, but cemented this renewal of friendship by treaties that were intended to become the basis of uninterrupted union, and to prove the source of all kind of commercial benefits and advantages to both nations.

With such views were those treaties formed, in virtue whereof your Excellency's countrymen assume the right of co-operating so decisively in the destruction of those, for whose benefit they were undoubtedly calculated, as much as for their own.

Your Excellency's good sense cannot help feeling the absurdity of a supposition, that would admit the advantages of a treaty to lie entirely on one side; and cannot, therefore, deny the reasonableness of accompanying the examination of such treaty, with an eye perpetually turned to the impropriety of such an idea.

The treaty alluded to, is that concluded at London, in the year one thousand six hundred

and seventy-four. Its intention was to regulate the trade and navigation of both states, and to place them on such a footing of clearness and security, that all disputes arising from them might, in future, be obviated; and that each party, by knowing the precise boundaries wherein they might move, and the orders they were to observe, should act conformably, and avoid, by paying a strict obedience to plain and positive directions, all occasions of involving their respective countries in any contests and altercations on these matters.

Such was the end and purport of this celebrated treaty.

It was drawn up with the strictest care and circumspection, by the ablest negotiators in both countries at that time; and visibly intended as a confirmation of all preceding treaties, to which it carefully refers. It cannot, therefore, be disjoined from them, whenever we attempt to give it that full vigour and efficacy in practice, which all treaties have the right to challenge.

It is essentially necessary to observe, this treaty was concluded with England, at a time when Holland was involved in one of the most dangerous wars that ever befel any state. Lewis the Fourteenth was attacking the Republic

public on every side with his armies: was purchasing enemies to it in every court of Europe, with his treasures: and was exerting every kind of intrigue, in order to spread mistrust and dissension throughout its members—an art wherein the French excel, perhaps, all other nations.

In the midst of these difficulties, it certainly behoved the ruling men of the state to act very cautiously with their neighbours. England was hardly detached from that fatal confederacy, which the indolence and sinister views of our Charles, and his ministry, had united to form for your destruction. The wishes of that monarch were well known to be with his brother of France; and his ministry were justly suspected to be in the latter's pay.

With these circumstances before them, it became the duty of good patriots to watch narrowly over all transactions with such men; and to give them none of those advantages that cunning and duplicity might enable them to improve.

The dreadful battle at Solebay had not been fought more than eighteen months, nor two others, almost as terrible, full eight, when this treaty was in agitation. The fleets of England were not disarmed; those of France
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were increasing, and gathering a strength which was becoming every day more alarming: the commerce of this latter kingdom was no less on the increase, and the Dutch had received ample experience of the enterprising genius of Colbert, and how attentive he was to omit nothing that might advance his favourite design, of rendering France a commercial and maritime power, equal, if not superior, to any in Europe.

Impressed with this conviction: feeling the indispensable necessity of obviating to the utmost, the augmentation of the French marine, and sensible, at the same time, that its chief support must arise from the importation of naval supplies into the French ports, on neutral bottoms: the very first idea that naturally occurred to such as were employed in negotiating with England, could be no other, after separating this formidable enemy from the interests of France, than to prevent him from affording to that inveterate and ambitious power, any of those succours, which, of all states and kingdoms in Europe, England, from the immense trade and shipping it possessed, was certainly best able to procure.

When your Excellency ponders on all these considerations, I am convinced that neither you, nor any other unprejudiced man, will hesitate a moment, in acknowledging that the

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persons who transacted the business of the various negotiations, then depending, between England and Holland, must have been divested of the commonest discernment, had they not guarded, with the utmost precaution, against all mistakes, all equivocations, all subterfuges that might have rendered those treaties fruitless and nugatory; knowing, as they did, that the very intent of them was to put it out of the power of either of the contracting parties to do any thing opposite to the interests of the other.

Your Excellency will please to add to these motives and considerations, the peculiar situation of Holland as a maritime power at that very important crisis. A treaty whereby its enemies were to be denied the benefits arising to them from the neutrality of other states, was the principal object it had in view. The other maritime powers she well knew herself more than able to cope with, had they attempted to bring naval supplies to the French ports. The marine of Sweden, she had, in a manner, annihilated at the famous fight in the Sound, during the siege of Copenhagen, about sixteen years before. She had an Ally in Denmark, equal to any efforts that Sweden could make. Spain was equally feeble at land and sea; and was, besides, for her own sake, closely connected with Holland. Portugal was
too

too much influenced by the Councils of England, to be any ways apprehended; and was but just emerging from her long and slavish dependence on the Spanish crown.

Thus, your Excellency must fully recollect, the only power from whence any apprehensions could originate, was England. It was, therefore, highly incumbent on the Dutch negotiators, to tie it down so effectually, as to distance all possibility of its acting an hostile part, either directly or indirectly.

And yet we do not find them solicitous to exact any special stipulation, on either side, that naval stores should not be carried to the enemy: on the contrary, they are set down in the list of commerciable goods, and not reputed contraband.

What are we, therefore, to infer from such a seeming oversight, in men so eminently qualified to transact a business wherein public utility and safety were both so deeply concerned? The inference is so obvious, that no candid person can possibly mistake it.

The reference contained in this treaty of one thousand six hundred and seventy-four, to that of amity and alliance in one thousand six hundred and sixty-seven, and to others, was deemed by them of sufficient force to defeat any sort of claims in the English, to carry naval stores to the French ports, while France was at

war with Holland ; it being expressly provided by those treaties, that neither of the contracting parties should assist the enemies of the other, with succours of any denomination, whether by land or sea : consequently, should naval stores become an assistance of the most pernicious and destructive kind to Holland, while in a state of hostility with France, they must necessarily and indispensably be considered as contraband articles.

Hence it fully appears, that considering the multiplicity of treaties, of the firmest alliance and union, made betwixt Great Britain and Holland, since that time, nothing can be more feebly supported, nothing more repugnant to the intent and purpose, for which they were framed, than a claim in the Dutch or the English to carry naval stores to the ports of any power at war with either of them.

If the words of the treaty of one thousand six hundred and seventy-four are uncandidly, or, to speak plain truth, are dishonourably and basely perverted, to the most perfidious and cruel uses : if they are adduced as an argument to authorize the Dutch in their endeavours to effect the destruction of this country : we are, on the other hand, much more powerfully authorized to appeal, in our own behalf, to the just interpretation of the many other treaties concluded between Great Britain and Holland, all which unani-

mously concur in representing them as *gentes amicissimæ*.

Here, then, to state the matter properly, the Dutch have, on their side, the bare letter of one treaty: the English have on theirs the spirit of all the treaties made between both nations: which, in the opinion of all dispassionate and sound judges, as much outweighs the bare letter of a single one, as the whole is superior to a part.

All states and nations have agreed that, where the letter has not provided, the spirit of treaties shall provide, a rule, by which they are mutually to abide in their necessary intercourse. They have agreed, further, that where the letter is not clear and intelligible, the sense and purport of it shall be made out by the spirit which pervades the general sense and meaning, and which was known to have presided at its formation: and, above all, with a careful eye to the motives that gave it birth.

In pursuance of this great and universal rule, if what is obscure or inconsistent in treaties, is to be explained by their spirit, *à fortiori* (well may one say) where an adherence to the letter of them would be absurd, that letter must be rectified by a liberal interpretation of its meaning. Now can there be a greater absurdity, than that a people in strict friendship with another, should derive from

treaties a right to co-operate in their destruction.

It cannot, certainly, be imagined, that they who administered the affairs of Holland, at the time of the treaty of one thousand six hundred and seventy-four, were not fully apprized of all that is above-mentioned. They were as intelligent and as able statesmen as ever directed the affairs of your Excellency's country. Nothing, therefore, it may justly be concluded, could fall out, in the ordinary course of things, which would escape their foresight.

If then it should be asked, why did they omit to guard, in positive and express terms, against the abuses which might be committed in supplying the enemy with naval stores, at any time, when the most imminent detriment and danger could not fail to result from it to either of the contracting parties?

The reply is found in the ample provision against all contingencies of this nature already made in the manifest, indisputable spirit of every treaty subsisting between the two nations: the collected strength of this spirit, composed an armour impenetrable to the blows of any but a *Gens inimicissima*; for such, in contradistinction to the terms used by civilians, I must stile a people who could infringe the sacred maxims and dictates of such a spirit.

Let those who delight in torturing arguments,

ments, revolve this matter as they please, I hope your Excellency will allow they cannot succeed, by any interpretation whatever, in their endeavours to invalidate the just rights and authority of that necessary spirit of concord, founded on the experience of two centuries, and cemented by repeated treaties, which connects Great Britain and Holland in so natural and so forcible a manner : and which unites so happily with their mutual interests, in opposing all those who are labouring with such fervour to prove the title of the Dutch to assist the enemies of Great Britain with naval stores, or in any other mode, in her present dangerous situation.

The enemies of this country, not being able to make good their opposition on this ground, will, no doubt, have recourse to a multitude of other arguments; and, when they find themselves forsaken by the letter of treaties, will call in the help of political considerations to maintain the justness of their pretensions.

But, when the cause a man espouses is substantially good, he need not fear to meet his enemy on any ground. For this reason, your Excellency will permit me to review the allegations which groundless rancour, and blind inveteracy, are so dextrous in fabricating to the prejudice of this country.

It is said, that during, and ever since our triumphant successes in the late war, we have exercised a sort of despotism on the seas: affecting to dictate, in every part of the globe, the laws to be observed by mercantile nations: and acting with a presumption, and a haughtiness, hardly equalled by that which was displayed by Lewis the Fourteenth, in the days of his highest prosperity: and no less criminal on that element which we boastingly call our own, than his conduct was in the countries where his arms gave him the superiority.

It is said, that we have formed a real and avowed scheme to monopolize all the commerce of the globe: that our ministers have had it invariably in their view, these many years, and that our discourses and books are full of that project: that we purpose, in the maturity of time, gradually to lay our hands on all the European possessions in America: and to reduce them to the level of our Colonies, whose trade we have made slavishly subservient to our own: and of whose prosperity we have, by the severest ordinances, fettered the growth, and limited the extent.

It is asserted, that, in consequence of such conduct and designs, Great Britain is become, in this century, what France was in the last,
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a state inimical, and, therefore, dangerous to all its neighbours; which, of course, they ought, according to the rules of good policy, to unite in opposing; least it should, in process of time, through the augmentation of its transmarine possessions, acquire a degree of strength and opulence, that might threaten an enthralldom to all the trade of Europe.

I have here laid before your Excellency, the principal allegations that our enemies have continually in their mouths; which, they pretend, sufficiently authorize them to sound an alarm against us from all quarters; and, like Cato in the Roman senate, to represent Great Britain in the same manner he did Carthage, as a power that ought to be destroyed for the security of the commercial interests of Europe.

Having thus stated the grievances which the foes of Great Britain have thought proper to lay to her charge, shall I, before I enter upon a refutation of them, crave your Excellency's permission to declare, that, so far as my reading and remembrance extend, a combination of malice, ignorance, and absurdity, superior, if equal, to such accusations as these, never yet disgraced the most incoherent rants of the wildest politicians.

In answer to the first of these charges,
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Great Britain is falsely accused of tyrannising on the ocean. In the whole course of the late war, she paid due respect to the flag of every prince and nation with which she was in amity. There does not exist a remonstrance from any power, complaining of any undue exertion of authority, that was not answered in a stile of friendliness, which clearly evinced how little disposed Great Britain was to encrease, by her haughtiness, the number of her foes. To general assertions general answers are fully adequate; but it may be asserted, on our side, without violating truth, that the testimonies of the far greatest part of the neutral nations in Europe militate in our cause. On the coasts of Barbary, a long-extended region: on the shores of Italy: throughout the whole Levant: we were, during the course of the late glorious war, esteemed, every where, a brave, a generous, an honest people. If words and discourses may be relied on, their wishes were constantly in our favour; and they seemed always pleased at our successes. We did not, on our part, one moment deviate, from the line of circumspectfulness and moderation which had gained us, and continued to preserve to us, that goodwill, that confidence, that kindness of behaviour, which only an uprightness and liberality

lity of conduct can secure: and which haughtiness never fails to destroy. Difference of religion did us no prejudice. We found the same amicableness of treatment from Roman Catholics and from Mahometans.

When, in the career of our victories, we had, unluckily, somewhat transgressed the limits prescribed for the legal commission of hostilities, notwithstanding this departure from the rigid laws of war, was in favour of the potentate on whose territory it was committed (since the enemy we were destroying was almost equally his own) yet, far from being elated with success, or presuming from our strength, the world saw us stooping respectfully to the laws of nations, and atoning, in due form, for a slight infringement on the rights of a power conscious of its dependence on the might and friendship of Great Britain, and obliged, shortly after, to claim and rely upon them both, for its immediate preservation. Was this haughtiness, was this oppression, was this despotism?

It is not necessary to remind your Excellency, the transaction alluded to is the defeat and destruction of the French Squadron, at Lagos, by Admiral Boscawen, and the embassy of the late Lord Tyrawley, to Lisbon, in consequence of that event.

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The Northern Powers did not experience any more of this pretended tyranny than those of the South. For the petty insolences, and misbehaviour, of private individuals employed in the depredations of war, a kingdom is not to answer. It is sufficient, when complained of, that they are redressed. But one may safely defy the most rancorous enemy of this nation to make out a single instance, wherein its conduct was justly taxable with cruelty, or with contempt of justice.

It were to be wished that in the catalogue of our friends and well-wishers, during the late war, impartiality would suffer us to enumerate the inhabitants of the United Provinces: but, alas, the same spirit of secret enmity actuated them, of which we feel the unhappy effects at the present. They claimed, and exercised, as they do now, the same privilege of injuring Great Britain, by assisting its enemies; and they built their claims on the same foundation, the treaty so often mentioned. The only difference between those and these times, was that their adherence to our enemies was not attended with the dangers which now accompany it. Great Britain, at that happy period, united under her victorious standards, her loyal and intrepid sons in every quarter of the globe. The assistance
afforded

afforded by Holland, during the whole course of the late war, was, your Excellency must know, of the utmost importance to France. It enabled her to bring home the productions of her colonies, and to export her own: it enabled her to employ all her seamen (an immense body) on board of her navy: it enabled her to give Great Britain many a bloody meeting on the ocean: and to dispute with her that sovereignty of the seas, which (if France should ever obtain it) Holland will be the first to rue: it enabled her to protract a war, which might have been terminated long before that deluge of blood was spilt, which inundated the plains of Germany, and of North America. To the assistance given by Holland to France, may, therefore, not unfairly be ascribed many of the calamities that afflicted mankind during the last war.

What will your Excellency say to the events which were taking place, at that time, in the East Indies? Without enquiring into the lawfulness of possessing ourselves of dominions appertaining to nations situated at the furthest extremities of the globe, thus much is certain, that the right of Great Britain to follow the example of her neighbours is indisputable. In these respects, both Holland
and

and Great Britain share the guilt as well as the profit.

Neither do I mean to exclude from this idea, those European nations whose inability alone sets bounds to their pretensions in these remote countries, the wealth and the weakness of which, are such inviting motives to the avarice and enterprising disposition of the Europeans. The Spaniards, the Portuguese, the French, and the Danes, are as greedy of Indian opulence, as the English or the Dutch : and want but their means, to accomplish the same ends.

Whatever rights time and prescription may confer, such as they may be, we possessed them in as full an amplitude as the inhabitants of the United Provinces. Through industry, through perseverance, through valour, we had obtained and formed settlements in various parts of that immense country. We had, according to the laws of war, dispossessed our enemies, the French, of those which they also had there acquired. After the expulsion of these formidable foes, we rested secure from all further dread of molestation, and were solely intent on the prosecution of that lucrative commerce, which it were highly desirable Europeans would make their only business in India, when, to their utter astonishment, our presidencies

presidencies in those parts, received information that the officers of the Dutch East-India Company were preparing a powerful armament against them. The injustice of such a conduct : the iniquity of assisting our enemies : the manifest violation of peace and friendship, without provocation, rendered such a design highly improbable. But, fortunately, we were prepared : and, notwithstanding the wiles and stratagems of these new enemies, they unexpectedly met with a reception that equally astonished them, and disconcerted all their measures.

The records of our presidency in Bengal, for the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty-nine, will afford your Excellency a more particular detail of these matters than is necessary here.

What the ultimate views of the Dutch East-India Company were, at that period, did not, and could not, remain long a secret. They are so well known, that no person will mention them, who does not mean to excite the resentment and indignation of Great Britain.

It grieves me, that truth and impartiality should compel me to lay before your Excellency, transactions and events which prove, beyond dispute, that, next to France, the greatest foe we had to encounter, during the last war, was Holland.

From

From these instances, one would be tempted to think the enmity of Holland to England, was as deeply rooted in the minds of its inhabitants, as the antipathy subsisting between the French and the English; and arose, in like manner, from the recollection of the grudges and feuds that so often drew the fierce ancestors of these two warlike nations into the field, and occasioned such horrid slaughters of their best and bravest people.

But, your Excellency knows, the cause of this opposition in your countrymen to the interests of this kingdom, to be of quite another nature. It is not a rivalry of military fame. It is not a rivalry of glory in the field of arts or arms. It is a motive of a far inferior kind which influences your countrymen: one that ought never to be admitted, though it enters frequently, into their councils.

This motive is a blind injudicious jealousy of the commercial grandeur of Great Britain. Jealousies of this kind are highly dangerous. History is full of proofs, that an emulation of commerce, indulged with violence, often induces men to adopt, indiscriminately, all methods of gain; to make no distinction between those that are fair and equitable, and those that are foul and unjust: and to look for profit wherever it can be found; whether
through

through the laudable channel of industry and trade, or through the sinister path of rapine and extortion; whether by the avowed plunder of a declared foe, or by secretly contriving the ruin of an unsuspecting friend.

Certain it is, the idea that the English are their most formidable competitors in trade, is the sole basis of that envy which pervades the general temper and conduct of the people in Holland, whenever the affairs of Great Britain come under their consideration.

After reviewing the conduct observed by our ministry during the late war, can it be said that Great Britain acted on any other principles but those of self-preservation and meer defence?

I hope, therefore, your Excellency will allow I have made it sufficiently clear, that Great Britain is most unjustly criminated for aiming or affecting to domineer, either on land or sea; that in the midst of her most brilliant successes, she respected the rights of her friends, and exercised her strength and courage on none but her foes; that, far from attempting to dictate imperiously to other nations, she acquiesced, in the most solemn, notorious manner, in the demands of satisfaction and redress for an offence of so trivial, so slight a nature, that it could not, in the strictness of a fair interpretation,

tation, be construed in such a light ; that she never deviated in any given instance, from the line of forbearance and moderation, which her politicians had laid down, from the first commencement of hostilities ; conscious the enemy they had to deal with, was too potent and dangerous, for them to throw an additional weight into his scale, by treating any other state with a haughtiness that might procure him its good offices. Armed with this spirit of equitableness, she disdained the use of any other weapons, than those which valour and good conduct enabled her to employ with so much lustre ; and avoided, above all things, that odious arrogance, in which her enemies accuse her, with so much untruth, of having equalled even Lewis the Fourteenth. She imitated him in nothing but his activity and his conquests ; and never envied him that pompous stile of self-importance, in which, your Excellency well remembers, he addressed himself to the States General, when he told them he would condescend to grant them peace, on condition he should participate in the direction and management of all their foreign possessions : that his religion should be established in their country : that all their European acquisitions should be surrendered into his hands : and that, as a lasting monument

ment of their dependence on his mercy, they should yearly repair to the foot of his throne, and acknowledge themselves, in the most solemn and express manner, the holders of their lands and liberties from his permission and generosity; and that, by way of ratifying all these concessions, and of paying a due homage to his person, crown, and dignity, they should, at the same time, annually present him with a medal, whereon all these acknowledgments should be formally engraved.

Such was the treatment which the ancestors of your Excellency's countrymen met at the hands of Lewis the Fourteenth. Such were the terms which Louvois, that tyrannical minister of a despotic prince, instigated his master to offer, as a ground of accommodation between him and a free people that had neither injured nor affronted him; and such, I beg your Excellency's leave to assert, will be the spirit of any pacification which may, in future times, take place between France and Holland, should (which Heaven avert) the House of Bourbon succeed in their present plans, and France become again, in consequence of the unhappy divisions between Great Britain and Holland, the same powerful and merciless enemy, which your forefathers experienced, in the

person of Lewis the Fourteenth, in one thousand six hundred and seventy-two.

Your Excellency will excuse my dwelling so circumstantially on this disagreeable part of your history ; but when Great Britain is accused of acting with haughtiness, and of forming views of lawless ambition, it is proper, not only to set forth the moderation she has preserved upon all occasions, but, at the same time, to remind the world, how much more severely, as well as justly, she can retort the accusation on the accusers themselves ; who are no others than either the subjects, the emissaries, or the venal tools, in other countries, of the court of France.

The second charge contained in the allegations against Great Britain, is that she cherishes a design gradually to make the whole commerce of the world exclusively her own : that her government has it constantly in view : and that her people's conversations, and even their writings, continually manifest it.

Here is, with your Excellency's permission, I'll venture to say, one of the most curious instances of complaint, that ever were seriously exhibited against the whole body of a people, together with their government.

It is, indeed, a complaint of so unusual a kind : of so strange and complex a nature : so difficult to state with any precision, and so totally impossible to prove, that, upon a very slight inspection, it becomes almost ludicrous.

It is not marvellous that any nation, or any government, should form very extensive views for the augmentation of the riches of the state, by increasing those of individuals through trade and industry ; but it is, surely, a matter of just amazement, that other states should view such designs in the light of a political crime and misdemeanour.

While the governours of a state endeavour no further than to improve the gifts of nature, or the resources of art, to their utmost extent and perfection ; instead of blaming and suspecting them of views detrimental to their neighbours, the world should, on the contrary, according to the received rules of common sense, rejoice in so laudable a subject for general imitation ; and propose to itself such people for a model to follow, rather than as an object of censure.

When commercial plans do not deviate from the limits of labour and industry : when their efforts tend only to employ the productions of the soil, the ingenuity, the activity of individuals, in such wise as to acquire wealth

and power, without exercising violence upon others, for the sake of such acquisition; nothing can be more absurd, than to tax them with sinister views. A man might as justly be accused of dishonesty, for endeavouring, by lawful means, to become richer than his neighbours.

In application to these general rules, which stand uncontroverted, your Excellency will permit me to examine what methods Great Britain has pursued to arrive at her present pitch of commercial grandeur; and whether they are such as she will be able to justify before the tribunal of an impartial public.

From the days of our Henry the Seventh, to the demise of Elizabeth, the trade of this country was in its infancy and youth. It began to feel the strength of manhood towards the latter years of James the First, and under his son Charles the First. But it was not until the reign of Charles the Second, it attained to that period of splendour, which has been ever since on the increase, and has excited the admiration of all nations, and perhaps the envy of most.

But in what manner have the natives of this island arrived at their present opulence? It was not by dispossessing, through force, any other people of their just properties: nor
massacring

massacring them, as the Spaniards did the rich and helpless Indians. It was not by exercising piracy upon the seas, as the ferocious inhabitants of the coast of Barbary. It was not, in short, through violence, nor through fraud, the riches of this country have been obtained. It was by a regular series of labour and patience, accompanied by a due share of integrity and discretion.

Far from entertaining the least thought of appropriating to itself the domains of other states, when, in the progress of its commercial undertakings, Great Britain foresaw, from the rapid exertions of her people, that a very extensive sphere would become necessary for their enterprising genius, she conceived the bold and daring idea of creating, as it were, a new world for them to range in, unmolested through any pretensions to a participation of it by foreign nations.

In this view the British Colonies were founded, nurtured, and improved to their present greatness and importance: happy for Great Britain, if her past efforts, during two centuries, for the grandeur and prosperity of her people, do not become a fatal proof of the short-sightedness and fallacy of human wisdom!

Will any man say, that in her other essays
for

for the benefit of her commerce, Great Britain has acted a part either tyrannical or insidious?

When she began to look towards India, did she harbour any views of hostility and conquest? If your Excellency will be pleased to examine the accounts extant of the various attempts made by the Europeans to obtain a trade and settlement in India, you will find the English were not the first who gave the natives a specimen of what the Europeans might become in future times; they, certainly, were not the first whose behaviour might have warned them of the danger of admitting among them people of such restless, such avaricious, and such daring dispositions.

But both English and Dutch should tread lightly on Indian ground. It is a subject too dangerous for their discussion. I shall, therefore, dismiss it with this single remark—that those individuals, in Holland, who take upon them to accuse the people here of aiming at a monopoly of commerce, through forcible measures, would do well to look at home, for an account of the transactions of their forefathers in India, at several periods during the last century.

One hardly knows how to give a serious answer to that part of the second charge, which

which criminales the people of this island, for allowing the notion of an exclusive trade, to form the subject of their discourses and of their writings.

The enemies and ill-wishers to Great Britain must certainly be uncommonly desirous to find us guilty, at all hazards, when they suffer their attention to stoop at such objects of crimination: but if they really and *bona fide* think such matters deserving of censure, let them repair to Paris, and hearken to the conversations of those zealous Frenchmen, who, in the warmth of their hearts, and the heat of their heads, unfeignedly believe that, with somewhat more of good management than has hitherto fallen to the lot of their ministries, France might easily ingross the trade of the whole world.

It is not merely in the vehemence of discourse this idea prevails; books have been written upon it. One, in particular, came out not long after the conclusion of the last war, wherein the anonymous author takes abundance of pains to prove, by a very circumstantial enumeration of all the particular branches of trade which may be prosecuted in France, and, by an ample catalogue of every article belonging to each branch, that France is able to drive out of the field of trade

trade all nations whatever : and that a competition with her would be impracticable, were those methods pursued which might, upon due investigation, be found effectual to that purpose.

If, therefore, the English are deserving of censure, for discouraging and writing on the subject of ingrossing the whole sphere of trade to themselves, the French are not less blameable ; and ought to be mentioned with an equal degree of asperity.

But your Excellency is too equitable to collect the guilt of a nation from the unguarded, inconsistent speeches of rash, uninformed individuals, or the fanciful lucubrations of inexperienced speculators.

While government suffers not the impetuosity of its subjects to break out into actual excesses and encroachments on their neighbours, it matters very little how much they amuse their imaginations with the schemes and projects of visionary men : all countries produce them ; and the mischief such characters occasion is seldom extended beyond their own persons.

I now come to the last charge, wherein Great Britain is said to harbour a design to seize, at convenient opportunities, all the European colonies in America successively, in order

order to place them upon the footing of her own, and to enjoy their exclusive commerce in the same manner.

They who alledge such designs against Great Britain, ought to do more; they ought to prove their reality, and the practicability of effecting them.

Had our colonies in North America remained ever so obediently attached to this country, it does not appear, from any chain of reasoning, necessary or probable the French or Spanish islands, or possessions on the continent, should run any risk of falling into our hands. They could become ours only through conquest; and it is the height of absurdity to imagine, that Great Britain should so far be deluded, as to provoke to an union against her two such powers as those of France and Spain; which would, in such case, meet with every help they could claim or desire; as all Europe would concur in the prevention of such an attempt on our part.

It is not improbable, indeed, that, aided by the strength of her colonies, Great Britain might, in the course of any future contest with those powers, become mistress of some of their islands; but our acquisitions would reach no farther. Europe knows too well the benefit arising from a partition of America among its present possessors, to suffer it
ever

ever to become the property of one; and
woeful experience has taught the British na-
tion the danger of either founding far distant
colonies, or acquiring very remote possessions.

Your Excellency will, therefore, allow me
to deny the propriety, so maliciously insisted
on, of uniting against Great Britain. Her
possessions abroad are, doubtless, of immense
benefit to her; but can never prove dangerous
to her European neighbours, while they con-
tinue to act on the same plan of policy, of
which she has so long, and so successfully,
given the example, by permitting no state to
assume a power, or pretensions, inimical to
the welfare and safety of the rest.

Here I shall rest, for the present, in hope,
that your Excellency will honour this epistolary
address with a perusal, and vouchsafe to con-
sider it as the production of one who wishes
most cordially to see an unfeigned renovation
of that strict amity which once subsisted be-
tween Great Britain and Holland.

With these sentiments, which ought to be
those of every Englishman, I remain, most
respectfully,

S I R,

Your Excellency's, &c.

